

God, and he communed with him in spirit, and then first learned the mysterious secret by which the weak things of this world confront and confound the strong—the secret of prayer by which the weak lisp of the creature's heart may move the arm of Almighty power. He prayed, and the light of God, and the love that feeds the light, streamed in with inexpressive sweetness on his parched heart. He prayed night and day; to the enforced fasting of his cruel captivity, he added the voluntary fasting of love; to the brutal scourging that he was forced to endure from his ruthless Pagan master, he added the voluntary discipline of penance and mortification, expiating with bitter tears and anguish of spirit, the sins of his youth. Thus in the fiery crucible of suffering was his soul prepared for the duties of His Apostolate; and when, acting under the inspiration of God, he eventually escaped from his exile and slavery, he was already a saint, ripe for God, and for the noble destiny to which God had destined him.

Patrick's return to his native land, however, did not blot out the memory of his place of exile. Strange to say, though the land of his captivity had naught but bitter memories for him, nevertheless he yearned with a consuming, indescribable yearning to be back among the generous, romantic people who had once been his masters. In his musings by day and his lonely visions by night, his heart was with his captors and he saw the children of that Emerald Isle stretching out their hands to him for deliverance. "In the night time", he tells us in his confessions, "I heard a wailing sound as of voices carried across the salt sea of the western ocean, and it fell upon my ears and said: 'O youth! O young man of God! return to us once more and remain with us.'" It was the voice of the Irish race, and my heart failed within me. Then he determined to return to them and bring joy to their desolation; and so, after 30 years of study, in the 48th year of his age, having been ordained and consecrated bishop, with the call of the Most High ringing and throbbing in his heart, and with the benign blessing of Peter's successor on his labors, he